

SETTLEMENT AND POST-WAR PLANNING¹

By

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As demobilization begins, thousands of soldiers and workers in war industries will return to their home communities. In search of a livelihood many of them will turn to farming. Some will be financially able to purchase their own farms, but more perhaps will look to State and Federal governments for assistance. If present congressional interest in associated legislation may be used as a criterion, apparently help will be forthcoming.

If disappointment is to be averted, and if a reasonable measure of success is to be achieved, planners and administrators must be willing to profit by the settlement experiments made by the Federal government in the 1930's. Careful studies have been made of several of these experiments and more are needed so that sufficiently conclusive generalizations may be available to avoid an uncharted course in extensive post-war resettlement.³

This paper is an attempt to summarize certain phases of development in a recent and specific attempt at resettlement on the Cumberland Plateau. Such conclusions as are reached here should be considered as tentative only and not to be accepted as absolutely valid without further study.

THE CUMBERLAND HOMESTEADS PROJECT

In the early thirties conditions on the Cumberland Plateau in Cumberland County, Tennessee were critical. The economic resources of the region were depleted: most of the marketable timber had been cut; several mines had been worked out or abandoned; and several textile mills had been forced to suspend operations. Whole communities were without employment and relief rates were so high that public and private relief agencies were overburdened. So when, to relieve areas of economic distress, Congress appropriated the sum of 25 million dollars to underwrite a unique program of resettlement, sympathetic leaders in the Cumberland

Plateau and elsewhere began to promote the establishment of a project in that area.

It proved to be a fairly easy matter to gain the support of a sympathetic congressman who prevailed upon administrative leaders to grant this request. With a minimum of study preceding it, a tract of land containing 22,748 acres were bought and plans were made so complete as to include a community center for the homesteaders, which were for development. The plans included some 350 homestead units (a number later reduced to 251), and an elaborate road system connecting homesteads with each other and with the community center. Since the units average only about 35 acres in size, the planners assumed that homesteading would supplement earnings which would be obtained from nonfarm employment in the area. In the initial stages of the project planners believed little difficulty would be encountered in inducing industry to come into the community.⁴

Early in 1934, relief workers and prospective homesteaders, most of whom were unemployed, began converting a veritable wilderness into what many believed would be their future homes. Clearing of land construction of homes progressed rapidly and employment payrolls became so large as to make Crossville, nearby county seat of Cumberland County, a boom town. The homesteaders were either unskilled or semi-skilled workers - farmers, miners, lumbermen, and textile workers. Many of them had been members of labor unions and had learned to guard their rights very closely.

DIFFICULTIES BEGIN EARLY

Before work on the project had progressed far, numerous wage disputes arose some workers claiming that certain homesteaders were shown favoritism. Although officials tried to foster harmony, their efforts were unsuccessful. Wrangles became

¹ Data for the paper were provided from James E. Montgomery, *Two Resettlement Communities on the Cumberland Plateau; an Introductory Study of Recent Utopian Reform*, unpublished M. A. thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1941; and Chapter 4 (written by the junior author and Dwight Davidson) in *A Place on Earth*, Russel Lord and Paul H. Johnstone, editors, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A., Washington: 1942.

² Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

³ See Social Research Reports I - XVIII, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A., Washington: 1938-39.

⁴ It was assumed that homesteaders would derive part of their income from raising red foxes and goats, and from the revival of native woodcrafts. But a satisfactory economic base was not so easy to establish as some had anticipated.

more involved and a labor union was organized, the leaders to represent the people to the administration.

Homesteaders quickly became dissatisfied with the "credit-hour" system. According to this scheme, each prospective homesteader received cash payment for one-third of his services and the remaining two-thirds were applied to the total cost of his particular unit. This method proved to be highly unsatisfactory both from the standpoint of management and homesteaders. The system of recording credit-hours was so complicated that the accountant resigned. This brought an investigation by the General Accounting Office which declared the plan of payment illegal and the disbursing officer refused to make any further payments to homesteaders. When the workers heard of these decisions they organized a rent strike that continued until delinquent payments were settled, a settlement which required a special act of Congress.

Cleavages between the Administration and the homesteaders were widened by the manner in which contracts defining the homesteaders' rights in the units were handled. When the first contract was presented to the homesteaders they vowed they would never sign "such unfair" agreements, by which they claimed they could be ejected from the project at slight provocation.

FAMILIES BECOME INCREASINGLY DISSATISFIED

The houses, once completed were functionally ill-adapted to the needs of farm families and the cost was much greater than stranded families could afford to pay. The 251 houses were built of native "craborchard" stone which was abundant on the project. Although these dwellings were pleasing in appearance, they were highly impractical. The kitchens were as small or smaller than those in urban homes; bedrooms were so small that often double-deck beds had to be used; proper construction methods were not followed, making the houses difficult to heat; and few, if any, of the dwellings were equipped with storage basements. The average cost of each house has been estimated at \$3,740, and the total cost per unit at \$7,325.

An effort was made to consolidate all religious denominations into one non-denominational community church. To facilitate this unity, prospective families were asked to sign a statement that they would not object to such a combination. Any rational attempt to bring about such digressive behavior was doomed to failure. Deep-set religious thinking, sanctions and values proved stronger than the paper agreement. Denominationalism was so strong in this

mountain community that the single church proved impracticable. It caused much dissension and was soon abandoned; churches of separate denominations were established.

One of the major reasons for confusion at Cumberland Homesteads was the constant shifting of management from one Federal agency to another. Each agency, at least so far as the homesteaders could determine, seemed to have a different policy concerning the way by which the people were to attain economic security. Initiated by the Subsistence Homestead Division of the Department of the Interior in December 1933, the community from then until May 1934, enjoyed maximum local control through an elected board of directors. But, in May 1935, all subsistence homesteads were transferred to the Resettlement Administration, under whose centralized control they survived until December 1937. At that time the subsistence homesteads were shifted to the Farm Security Administration, and in 1942, to the Federal Public Housing Authority.

One of the major factors which thwarted the purposes of the project was the lack of an adequate economic base. During the first year or so, homesteaders were able to earn a fair living from construction work in the community. But when the units were completed, both administrators and homesteaders suddenly discovered that the project was without necessary employment opportunities. Industry was sought from far and near, but with little success. In view of the failure to attract some form of industry, steps were taken to encourage more farming activities on the project, and under the Resettlement Administration an "economic justification" was prepared which provided a blueprint for a cooperative company that would develop some 29 separate cooperative enterprises. This plan contained a detailed scheme whereby farm products would be produced, processed, and marketed cooperatively. The Cumberland Cooperative Company, as it was called, was composed of homesteaders and their wives, with a government-supplied manager. To cover costs a loan of \$1,100,000 was made to the company. Of the 29 proposed cooperative enterprises, the following were initiated either by the Resettlement Administration or the Farm Security Administration: A trading post, hog program, sorghum plant, feed mill, community farm, coal mine, cannery, greenhouse and plant propagation, woodwork and handicraft program, livestock program, and cooperative production and marketing plans.

None of these ventures were successful. Many factors, both social and economic, contributed

to their collapse. The cooperatives never became cooperatives in any literal sense of the word. Apparently, officials both regional and national knew little of the individualism of mountaineers, for the homesteaders were given little help in either the theory or the practice of cooperatives but were left, in large measure, to their own resources and ingenuity in assuming their roles as members of the many cooperative projects. Informal patterns of organization, to which the people were accustomed, quickly developed and too frequently became formidable obstacles to the function of the formal organizational structure formulated and handed down by administrative personnel at the Regional and Washington levels.

Several of the cooperatives were rather obviously grandiose and overcapitalized. As an example, a total allotment for a trading post (a small general store) was \$29,620; for a cannery \$20,743; and for a coal mine, \$11,500. The expenses of production were so great and markets so inaccessible that there was a loss on processed goods. For example, some vegetables were canned at a cost of around \$1.50 per case, but were sold for 50 cents per case. As a result of such economic losses, and other weaknesses the last of the cooperative ventures had closed by the summer of 1941. This experience deeply embittered most of the homesteaders toward cooperatives and added considerable fuel to a general flame of doubt that had long been kindled in the minds of homesteaders and local sponsors.

THE PROJECT IN 1943

The present world conflict has obviously interrupted this series of experiments on the Cumberland Plateau and, ironically enough, has brought conditions for which training on the project has eminently fitted the homesteaders. Many have left and others are leaving the project to enter war industries, and, because of the experience and training they received in constructing the community, they have been in a relatively favorable bargaining position for industrial employment. Work during the construction phase of the project enabled many of the homesteaders to learn such skills as carpentry, bricklaying, stone masonry, plumbing and other such technical skills as to qualify them for highly remunerative war work.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From this rather intensive study of the Cumberland Homesteads it is believed that certain weaknesses in the resettlement community can be established with confidence. A knowledge of these

weaknesses will stand planners and administrators in good stead if they are to be avoided in similar projects which are now under consideration for the demobilization period.

- A. Planners of Cumberland Homesteads failed to make a thorough investigation of the natural resources and markets of that area and to acquaint themselves with the culture of the people whom they proposed to rehabilitate. Initial plans were predicated upon the assumption that industry could be attracted to the area, an assumption which proved to be mistaken. Utopian elements were allowed to enter the development of the project. Plans for functionally efficient farm and home units for practical mountain folk were sacrificed to ideas of a cooperative community, beautiful stone houses, and a community church.
- B. The project was shifted from one Federal agency to another at the expense of continuity of policy. Different administrations not only prohibited continuous and systematic development, but at times were antithetical in what they proposed to do.
- C. Until the first part of 1941 the project had had a total of 5 managers with as many different ideas as to what its purpose and functions should be.
- D. Generally the administration of the colony was remote and superimposed. Many emerging issues might have been handled locally; but by the time they were brought to the attention of regional and national leaders who knew few of the details, small issues had become magnified out of all proportion.
- E. The cost of the units was probably prohibitive for the group and the purposes for which they were designed. In addition to excessive expense, they were functionally inefficient and generally undesirable for farm families.
- F. Cooperative enterprises were to a certain extent grandiose, overcapitalized, and strange to the values of the mountain folk. Minimum effort was made to educate homesteaders in cooperative principles. In view of the individualism and self-reliance of natives of the Cumberland Plateau very probably cooperatives could have succeeded only after an intensive and extended program of education.

G. Should post-war settlement be undertaken by the Federal Government at the end of the present crisis, planners and administrators must be willing to profit by the experience of the Resettlement Administration in the 30's. Studies that

have been conducted and others that might well be made might not only save the much-dramatized taxpayer many dollars but avert individual and family disorganization that has been shown to accompany unsuccessful settlement efforts.

NUTRITION EDUCATION IN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

By

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I. SUMMARY

This paper deals with educational methods and organizational policies intended to lead established labor organizations into a desirable social activity new to them. Specifically it deals with initiating organized labor into nutrition education through the use of its own organizational network and its facilities. The activity aspires to reach all union members and yet be part of the national nutrition movement in which every section of the population participates.

Labor was at first suspicious of nutrition education because its leaders as well as rank and file believed it smacked of social service or welfare work which in their minds were contrary to the customary techniques employed by labor in past efforts at improving standards of living. It was necessary to overcome this prejudice and to attempt to find a secure place for nutrition education in the program and activities of every international union down to its smallest local, in every educational committee and in the social program of organized labor. It was necessary next to bring about close cooperation between unions and other civic organizations so as to make the nutrition activity what it should be above all, a truly cooperative, community effort.

Experience showed that the old prejudices gave rise to considerable obstacles. These had to be overcome, particularly the prejudice which hindered successful cooperation between labor and other groups in the community. Suspicion of labor and labor's suspicions had to be broken down.

To bring the new information on nutrition down to habits and practices of individual union

members it was necessary to adopt an educational technique which had not been used on a wide scale before but which proved successful. This technique consisted of using a historical approach based upon the relativism of history and cultural anthropology, thus concentrating largely upon weakening the rivets which bind the pattern of prejudice. Only after achieving such infiltration was the new knowledge introduced.

It was also found that best results were accomplished when the people to be reached were given full independence and were permitted to initiate and carry out the work themselves. Organized labor conducted the campaigns with only gentle guidance from government agencies and experts. All the activities were not only controlled by labor, but the labor organizations themselves subsidized all the aspects of the campaign. Proper motivation was readily found and the war situation presented an excellent medium in which a variety of motives were rooted. Novelty of stimulation was found to be essential. The methods employed and the results obtained are discussed, as well as their bearing on similar problems involving the rupture of old prejudices. Conclusions are presented in the form of suggestions for application in other fields involving the same problem of breaking down indifference and resistance and of replacing old habits by new ones based upon science.

II. PROBLEMS AND METHODS

The Nutrition Programs Branch, a part of the Office of Distribution, War Food Administration, is the present name of the government agency coordinating nutrition education throughout the

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